



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF
HOMELESS SERVICES

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLANNING

PROGRESS REPORT

November 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS) is developing a Strategic Investment Plan to prioritize the use of key resources, including but not limited to resources provided through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), to support efforts to prevent and end homelessness in Baltimore.

The development of the Strategic Investment Plan is being directly informed and guided by robust community engagement activities, which have been intentionally designed to solicit feedback from a diverse group of stakeholders, including the Continuum of Care (CoC) and its Lived Experience Advisory Committee and Youth Action Board, MOHS staff, non-profit service providers, and government agency partners. As described in more detail below, interviews with key leaders, Listening Sessions with a range of stakeholders, surveying activities, and discussion with a Core Leadership Team formed for this project have all been implemented to generate ideas and to determine community priorities for highly-impactful investments.

This Progress Report provides a status update regarding the implementation of community engagement processes and the resulting recommended priorities for investments, developed through Listening Sessions, surveying activities, and the convening of a Core Leadership Team for this Strategic Investment Planning project. Further, this Report summarizes proposals for consideration for investment of ARPA local aid funding and from other resources, which were deeply informed by the recommended priorities developed through the community engagement processes.

The community engagement and prioritization processes described within this Progress Report resulted in a prioritized list of nine (9) areas for strategic investments:

High Priority Areas for Strategic Investments

- **Innovative Housing Finance:** Invest in innovative financing models to support expanded development pipeline of permanent supportive housing and deeply affordable housing units designated for people experiencing homelessness, including acquisition and predevelopment financing. Specific financing mechanism or vehicle to be determined. Operations and services costs will need to be integrated and could be considered for funding via operating and services reserves. Referral and lease-up mechanisms should be determined in partnership with CoC and MOHS.
- **Homelessness Diversion:** Create new homelessness diversion program and problem-solving services that can prevent people from experiencing homelessness or support people to quickly exit homelessness.
- **Rapid Resolution:** Fund rapid resolution and quick housing placement supports to help people exit homelessness to stable housing from unsheltered settings, interim housing, and emergency shelters.
- **Interim Housing:** Expand interim housing options for all populations, including adults, families with children, transition age youth, and unaccompanied minor youth. Preference may be for smaller settings that may be non-congregate residential, and must offer dignity-based environments, and provide trauma-informed and housing-focused services to help residents exit to stable housing. This may include the purchase of hotels for non-congregate shelter that can be repurposed for housing at future date.
- **Housing Navigation and Landlord Engagement:** Develop a robust coordinated approach to housing navigation and landlord engagement to improve access to quality apartment units. A combination of innovative strategies should be explored, which may include: 1) bridge funding to cover rent and help households matched through Coordinated Access to be immediately moved into an apartment while other eligibility process steps are covered and long-term funding is in place; 2) access to a funding pool in exchange for an agreement to provide units to be filled by Coordinated Access and to upgrade quality of units, meet Housing Quality Standards, provide safer living environments for people, and mitigate costs that might result from damages to units; 3) expanded, centralized landlord engagement strategies to better identify available quality units in neighborhoods desired by people served through Coordinated Access; 4) a pool of pre-inspected units to speed opportunities for people to find and move into housing; 5) centralized housing navigation resources to better connect people to housing options, assist with process of securing units; 6) other strategies that result in access to quality units in a variety of neighborhoods.

Moderate Priority Areas for Strategic Investments

- **Services in Permanent Supportive Housing:** More intensive, higher-quality services within existing permanent supportive housing programs to better support long-term stability and success, which could include funding services reserves within projects.
- **Clinical Services:** Expand and enhance access to clinical services to address physical and behavioral health (mental health and substance use disorders) needs of people who are experiencing homelessness in unsheltered and sheltered settings.

Lower Priority Areas for Strategic Investments

- **Training and Capacity Building:** Establish training and other capacity building support to improve the quality of operations/services and align with fidelity to best practices. This should be available to all providers and partners serving the housing and crisis response needs of people who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness.
- **Basic Services:** Restore or expand some basic services, like restrooms/showers, mobile showers, safe places for people to sit and rest during the day.

The recommended priorities for investment directly informed the development of six (6) proposals developed by MOHS for consideration for ARPA local aid funding and other funding streams.

Proposal Title	Brief Description
Housing Accelerator Fund	Creation of a Housing Accelerator Fund to implement innovative funding mechanisms that will foster the development of an expanded supply of permanent supportive housing units for people exiting chronic homelessness. The Fund would be jointly administered by MOHS and Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and leverage significant Federal, State, and private sector investments. Funding proposed is projected to help support the development and 3 years of operations and services for an additional 675 units of permanent supportive housing, the estimated number of units needed to meet permanent supportive housing needs among people currently experiencing homelessness in Baltimore.
Homelessness Diversion Program	Establishment of a homelessness diversion program to ensure individuals and families experiencing housing instability do not become homeless and enter the emergency shelter system. Funding proposed is projected to provide diversion-focused financial assistance and services for 600 individuals and for 450 families with children before the end of December 2024.
Rapid Resolution Program	Establishment of a rapid resolution fund to help individuals and families experiencing an episode of homelessness to quickly re-enter stable housing and avoid the increased risks of COVID-19 infection and illness associated with homelessness. Funding proposed would create a fund to provide flexible client assistance to support rapid exits from homelessness for 480 households before the end of December 2024, as well as support training for services providers in rapid resolution practices.
Purchase of Interim Housing / Emergency Housing Facilities for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness	Purchase of hotel properties to create permanent non-congregate interim housing / emergency housing facilities for adult men and women experiencing homelessness in Baltimore City, with the potential for conversion to permanent housing units in the future. Funding proposed is projected to support the acquisition, renovation, and 3 years of operations of 2 sites providing an estimated 275 interim housing/emergency housing beds.

Housing Navigation and Landlord Recruitment Support Program	Strengthen housing navigation services and landlord recruitment efforts to significantly reduce the length of time that individuals and families remain homeless between receiving a housing offer and moving into a suitable permanent housing unit. Funding proposed would support: additional Housing Identification Specialist positions; continued operations of a cloud-based software platform to facilitate housing inspections and create a centralized inventory of available units easily accessible housing service providers and case managers; flexible landlord incentives and risk mitigation funding; and an expanded network of Housing Navigation Specialist positions.
Shelter Demobilization for COVID-19 Non-Congregate Shelter Sites	Support hotel demobilization and rehousing efforts for individuals experiencing homelessness currently residing in hotel shelter decompression sites established to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including short-term rental assistance and case management services. Proposed funding would fill need for an estimated 177 additional Rapid Rehousing Program slots to meet rehousing needs of current clients at hotel shelter sites, by funding additional rental assistance, utility assistance, and move-in costs, and additional shelter-based case management services and rapid rehousing case management services.

It is important to note that ARPA proposals must be evaluated through the processes that have been established by the Recovery Office, and these proposals are being considered among proposals submitted by other City Offices, Departments and community partners. There is no assurance that these proposals will be awarded funding or at what scale they might be funded.

The ideas, information, and priorities identified through these community engagement processes and by the Core Leadership Team, however, will be used to inform other future funding and resource development strategies. If possible, the final Strategic Investment Plan to be developed through this process will reflect any funds awarded to these proposed programs and projects.

PURPOSE OF THIS PROGRESS REPORT

The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services is developing a Strategic Investment Plan to prioritize the use of key resources, including but not limited to resources provided through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), to support efforts to prevent and end homelessness in Baltimore. The City has engaged a consulting team, including national experts, Barbara Poppe, Matthew Doherty, and Rivianna Hyatt, and local experts with lived experiences of homelessness, Lolah James and Anthony Williams, to guide this investment planning process.

This Progress Report provides a status update regarding the implementation of community engagement processes and the resulting recommended priorities for investments, developed through Listening Sessions, surveying activities, and the convening of a Core Leadership Team for the Strategic Investment Planning project. Further, this Report summarizes proposals submitted to the Recovery Office for consideration for investment of ARPA local aid funding, which were deeply informed by the recommended priorities developed through the community engagement processes.

This Progress Report should not be seen as a "first draft" of the Strategic Investment Plan that will be developed, but does include information and investment priorities that will be reflected within the final Plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESSES AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

The development of the Strategic Investment Plan is being directly informed and guided by robust community engagement activities, which have been intentionally designed to solicit feedback from a diverse group of stakeholders, including the Continuum of Care (CoC) and its Lived Experience Advisory Committee and Youth Action Board, MOHS staff, nonprofit service providers, and government agency partners.

As described in more detail below, interviews with key leaders, Listening Sessions with a range of stakeholders, and surveys have been implemented to identify issues/concerns, to generate ideas for highly-impactful investments, and to determine community priorities for investments across the following four (4) Action Areas:

Action Area 1

Protecting Health and Safety of People Experiencing Homelessness During the Continued COVID-19 Pandemic: As the pandemic continues with no foreseeable end date, additional investments will be needed to continue activities currently in progress and to implement new responses, as necessary.

Action Area 2

Improving Supply and Access to Housing that People Can Afford to Exit Homelessness: Without expanded supply and improved access to affordable, quality housing options, the homelessness response system will continue to struggle to assist people to exit homelessness quickly and successfully, at a time when risks of entering homelessness are increasing.

Action Area 3

Reducing Unsheltered Homelessness: Unsheltered homelessness is both a humanitarian crisis and the most visible form of homelessness in the community. Investments will be needed to save lives and to provide tangible evidence of the community's ability to drive progress on homelessness.

Action Area 4

Strengthening Crisis Response and Sheltering Activities and Capacity: The community must address shorter-term needs, such as operations and rehousing activities out of temporary hotels, longer-term sheltering capacity and quality needs, and the implementation of diversion activities to reduce demand for shelter and other crisis services.

Further, the investment ideas that were generated through those processes were then discussed with a 14-person Core Leadership Team that has been formed to guide the implementation of this Strategic Investment Planning process and that is comprised of City staff, Continuum of Care leaders, people with lived expertise of homelessness, and representatives from other organizations actively engaged in responding to homelessness in Baltimore. Discussion of the investment ideas generated, and surveying of the Core Leadership Team, resulted in a prioritized list of nine (9) areas for strategic investments, described at the end of this section. The

recommended priorities for investment directly informed the development of proposals submitted by MOHS to the Recovery Office for consideration for ARPA local aid funding.

Interviews with Key Leaders and Findings

The consulting team interviewed 16 key leaders within the community, representing leaders within City departments, homelessness services and housing providers, advocates, and people with lived experiences of homelessness. These interviews identified several themes and concerns, briefly summarized here:

System and Partnership Themes

- Strong positive response to pandemic, including opening of hotels, reductions in sweeps, vaccinations and testing
- Trust, consistency, and transparency challenges
- Role clarity and coordination issues
- Lack of adherence to Housing First
- Quality of programs and services concerns
- Multiple past planning processes have not led to change or progress
- Lack of clarity on roles and scopes of other consultants, technical assistance providers, and initiatives
- Need for authentic partnership with people with lived expertise

Gaps and Needs within System

- Access to affordable units in market
- Need for scale and fidelity across all interventions, including Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Rehousing, and Rental Assistance
- Need to expand focus on diversion and prevention strategies
- Strategies for addressing encampments and unsheltered homelessness
- Rehousing people out of non-congregate shelters/hotels
- Transformation of approach to shelter

The information gathered through these interviews helped guide the identification of the four (4) prioritized Action Areas (described above) and the plans and approach to the Listening Sessions facilitated during the weeks of September 13 and September 20, 2021. Further themes and concerns related to gaps and needs within the homelessness response system are identified within *Attachment: Themes and Ideas Emerging from Community Engagement Processes*.

Listening Sessions and Ideas Generated

MOHS and the consulting team implemented Listening Sessions with community partners and stakeholders, and also held dedicated sessions with the Baltimore City Continuum of Care's Lived Experience Advisory Committee and Youth Advisory Board. More than 100 people received invitations to participate in the six (6) Community Listening Sessions and a total of 25 people participated in one of more of those sessions. Listening Sessions with the Lived Experience Advisory Committee and the Youth Advisory Board were held during the regular meetings of those groups, and MOHS staff were invited to participate in a staff-only session.

These Listening Sessions were designed and facilitated to seek input and insights across the following questions:

- What is working well about the community response to homelessness?
- What needs to improve?
- What areas should be priority for potential one-time investments of funding, or should be prioritized for other potential funding sources, and why?
- What level of one-time investment of funding should be requested and could be effectively integrated into the homelessness response system?
- What are the most important changes in how the community addresses homelessness that should be considered and prioritized for system-strengthening?

Schedule of Listening Sessions

Date	Listening Session
9/14/21	Community Listening Session: Improving Supply and Access to Housing that People Can Afford in Order to Exit Homelessness
9/14/21	Community Listening Session: Reducing Unsheltered Homelessness
9/15/21	Community Listening Session: Strengthening Crisis Response and Sheltering Activities and Capacity
9/15/21	Community Listening Session: Improving Supply and Access to Housing that People Can Afford in Order to Exit Homelessness
9/16/21	Community Listening Session: Reducing Unsheltered Homelessness
9/16/21	Community Listening Session: Strengthening Crisis Response and Sheltering Activities and Capacity
9/17/21	Listening Session with Lived Experience Advisory Committee (LEAC)
9/21/21	Listening Session with Mayor's Office of Homeless Services staff
9/21/21	Listening Session with Youth Advisory Board (YAB)

The consulting team developed summary lists of the investment ideas generated through these Listening Sessions, aligned with the Action Areas, including:

- 17 investment ideas for Improving Supply and Access to Housing that People Can Afford in Order to Exit Homelessness;
- 11 investment ideas for Reducing Unsheltered Homelessness; and
- 20 ideas for Strengthening Crisis Response and Sheltering Activities and Capacity.

Please see *Attachment A: Themes and Ideas Emerging from Community Engagement Processes* for a full list of the investment ideas generated through the Listening Sessions.

Surveying Activities and Analyses of Findings

These full range of investment ideas generated through the Listening Sessions were then the focus of [on-line surveys](#), which were distributed to people invited to the Community Listening Sessions (generating 26 responses), to LEAC and YAB members (generating 8 responses), and to MOHS staff (generating 16 responses), to seek input to help guide decisions regarding prioritization among the ideas. Surveys asked respondents to:

- Assess each investment idea listed for each Action Area as to whether it was of the Very Highest Priority for Investment, a High Priority for Investment, a Low Priority for Investment, or the respondent had No Opinion; and
- Identify their top two Most Important Priorities for Investment among the ideas listed for each Action Area.

Further, to assess their overarching priority for investments, survey respondents were asked “Which type of outcome should receive the largest investment of one-time funding to achieve the greatest long-term impact?” from among:

- Increase permanent housing options and make housing access faster and easier
- Increase support to people who are unsheltered or living in encampments
- Increase temporary shelter options and make environments more welcoming with supports to exit more quickly to housing

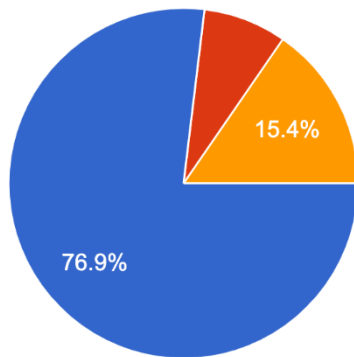
The consulting team analyzed the survey results in several different ways, including comparing and contrasting responses from Community Listening Session invitees, the Lived Experience Advisory Committee and the Youth Advisory Board members, and MOHS staff.

Overarching Priority for Investments

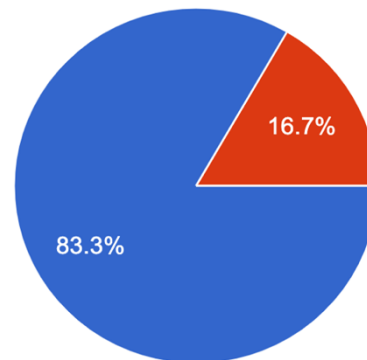
As illustrated in the charts below, in response to the question “Which type of outcome should receive the largest investment of one-time funding to achieve the greatest long-term impact?”:

- “Increase permanent housing options and make housing access faster and easier” was overwhelmingly the top priority among all respondents, including for Community Listening Session invitees, the Lived Experience Advisory Committee and the Youth Advisory Board, and MOHS staff.
- “Increase support to people who are unsheltered or living in encampments” was the second highest priority for Lived Experience Advisory Committee and Youth Advisory Board members and for MOHS staff, but the third highest priority for Community Listening Session invitees.
- “Increase temporary shelter options and make environments more welcoming with supports to exit more quickly to housing” was the third highest priority for Community Listening Session invitees and MOHS staff, but was not prioritized by Lived Experience Advisory Committee and Youth Advisory Board members who responded to the survey.

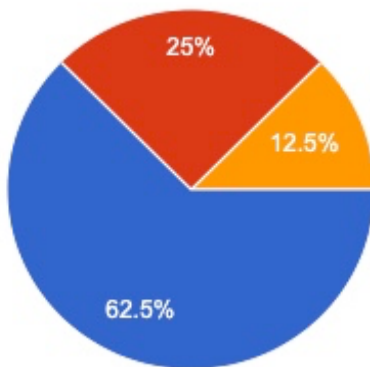
Community Listening Session invitees



Lived Experience Advisory Committee and Youth Advisory Board members



MOHS staff



- Increase permanent housing options and make housing access faster and easier
- Increase support to people who are unsheltered or living in encampments
- Increase temporary shelter options and make environments more welcoming with supports to exit more quickly to housing

Prioritization Among Investment Ideas

The survey responses were further analyzed to assess the prioritization of investment ideas from among the many ideas generated through the Listening Sessions. Many different ideas were found to have some level of support as being among the very most important priorities, so further analysis was needed to assess overall prioritization across results, including analyzing for each Action Area:

- Which ideas had the highest “Net Positives” calculated as the number of people ranking them as of High Priority minus the number of people ranking them as Low Priority; and
- Which ideas had the most support as being either the #1 or #2 Most Important Priority among respondents

That analysis resulted in the following investment ideas receiving the highest levels of prioritization (not listed in order of prioritization results) for the following Action Areas:

Improving Supply and Access to Housing that People Can Afford to Exit Homelessness

- Innovative financing models that support expanded pipeline of permanent housing units in development, including acquisition and pre-development financing
- Expand Affordable Housing Trust Fund since it is existing process and vehicle for a range of housing uses; include requirement that CoC and MOHS assist in crafting means to ensure homeless households benefit
- Increase funding for Rapid Rehousing, including Rapid Rehousing programming with longer lengths of assistance, more flexibility in support provided
- Move-on strategy to support people to successfully exit Permanent Supportive Housing programs and create capacity to serve other people who need Permanent Supportive Housing
- Expand centralized housing navigation resources to better connect people to housing options, assist with process of securing units
- More intensive, higher-quality services within permanent supportive housing programs to better support people stability and success, could include funding services reserves within projects
- Training for staff working within permanent housing programs to strengthen quality of services and outcomes
- Increase pay for staff working within permanent housing programs to attract and retain skilled staff

Reducing Unsheltered Homelessness

- Restore or expand some basic services, like showers, mobile showers, safe places for people to sit and rest during the day
- Fund rapid resolution services and bridge housing options for newly unsheltered homeless people
- Prioritize and fund direct and quick housing placement directly from encampments and unsheltered settings
- Enhance outreach teams by adding staff with clinical skills to engage people with behavioral health care challenges and to link them to services
- Provide non-congregate shelter options that are welcoming and low-barrier
- Increase pay for staff working with people who are unsheltered to attract and retain skilled staff

Strengthening Crisis Response and Sheltering Activities and Capacity

- Expand shelter/interim housing options for all populations, including adults, families with children, transition age youth, and unaccompanied minor youth
- Convert hotel(s) to non-congregate shelter or create non-congregate shelter options through other strategies
- Create new homelessness diversion program and problem-solving services that can prevent people from experiencing homelessness or support people to quickly exit homelessness
- Enhance and strengthen programs to provide safe and affirming shelter and services for TLGBQIA+ people experiencing homelessness
- Expanded mental health and substance use disorder treatment services and programs
- Increase pay for staff working with in crisis response and shelter/emergency housing programs to attract and retain skilled staff

These survey results were discussed at the first meeting of the Core Leadership Team for this strategic investment planning process to seek recommendations for which investment ideas should serve as the basis for proposals to be submitted to the Recovery Office for consideration for ARPA local aid resources.

Core Leadership Team Recommendations

A Core Leadership Team of 14 people has been formed to guide the implementation of this strategic investment planning process. The Core Leadership Team is comprised of City staff, Continuum of Care leaders, people with lived expertise of homelessness, and representatives from other organizations actively engaged in responding to homelessness in Baltimore. The Team is co-chaired by Irene Agustin from MOHS and Alice Kennedy from DHCD.

The Core Leadership Team met on September 23, 2021 and discussed the findings from the Listening Sessions and the surveying activities. Based upon that discussion, which included recommendations for how different investment ideas, within and across Action Areas, could be aligned or combined, the consulting team developed the following list of nine areas for strategic investments. Following the meeting, the Core Leadership Team members were then asked to complete a survey to determine their recommended prioritization among these potential areas for strategic investment, resulting in the following prioritization guidance:

High Priority Areas for Strategic Investments

- **Innovative Housing Finance:** Invest into innovative financing models to support expanded development pipeline of permanent supportive housing and deeply affordable housing units designated for people experiencing homelessness, including acquisition and predevelopment financing. Specific financing mechanism or vehicle to be determined. Operations and services costs will need to be integrated and could be considered for funding via operating and services reserves. Referral and lease-up mechanisms should be determined in partnership with CoC and MOHS.
- **Homelessness Diversion:** Create new homelessness diversion program and problem-solving services that can prevent people from experiencing homelessness or support people to quickly exit homelessness.
- **Rapid Resolution:** Fund rapid resolution and quick housing placement supports to help people exit homelessness to stable housing from unsheltered settings, interim housing, and emergency shelters.
- **Interim Housing:** Expand interim housing options for all populations, including adults, families with children, transition age youth, and unaccompanied minor youth. Preference may be for smaller settings that may be non-congregate residential, and must offer dignity-based environments, and provide trauma-informed and housing focused services to help residents exit to stable housing. This may include the purchase of hotels for non-congregate shelter that can be repurposed for housing at future date.
- **Housing Navigation and Landlord Engagement:** Develop a robust coordinated approach to housing navigation and landlord engagement to improve access to quality apartment units. A combination of innovative strategies should be explored, which may include 1) bridge funding to cover rent and help households matched through Coordinated Access to be immediately moved into an apartment while other eligibility process steps are covered and long-term funding is put in place; 2) access to a funding pool in exchange for an agreement to provide units to be filled by Coordinated Access and to upgrade quality of units, meet Housing Quality Standards, provide safer living environments for people, and mitigate costs that might result from damages to units; 3) expanded, centralized landlord engagement strategies to better identify available quality units in neighborhoods desired by people served through Coordinated Access; 4) a pool of pre-inspected units to speed opportunities for people to find and move into housing; 5) centralized housing navigation resources to better connect people to housing options, assist with process of securing units; 6) other strategies that result in access to quality units in a range of neighborhoods.

Moderate Priority Areas for Strategic Investments

- **Services in Permanent Supportive Housing:** More intensive, higher-quality services within existing permanent supportive housing programs to better support people's stability and success, which could include funding for services reserves within projects.
- **Clinical Services:** Expand and enhance access to clinical services to address physical and behavioral health (mental health and substance use disorders) needs of people who are experiencing homelessness in unsheltered and sheltered settings.

Lower Priority Areas for Strategic Investments

- **Training and Capacity Building:** Establish training and other capacity building supports to improve the quality of operations/services and align with fidelity to best practices. This should be available to all providers and partners serving the housing and crisis response needs of people who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness.

- **Basic Services:** Restore or expand some basic services, like restrooms/showers, mobile showers, safe places for people to sit and rest during the day

INVESTMENT PROPOSALS

Informed by the guidance provided through these community engagement processes, and the recommended priorities from the Core Leadership Team, MOHS has developed six proposals for consideration for investment of ARPA local aid funding and from other resources.

Five of these proposals are directly aligned with each of the five High Priority recommendations from the Core Leadership Team. A sixth proposal, seeking to expand resources available to rehouse people out of the temporary non-congregate shelters being operated in hotel settings, is directly aligned with the overall top priority among survey participants to “Increase permanent housing options and make housing access faster and easier.”

It is important to note that ARPA proposals must be evaluated through the processes that have established by the Recovery Office, and these proposals are being considered among proposals submitted by other City Offices and Departments and community partners. Therefore, there is no assurance that these proposals will be awarded funding or at what scale they might be funded.

The ideas and information and priorities identified through these community engagement processes and the Core Leadership Team, however, will be used to inform future funding and resource development strategies. If possible, the final Strategic Investment Plan to be developed through this process will reflect the outcome of these proposals to the Recovery Office.

The six investment proposals are described in the table on the following page.

Investment Proposals

Proposal Title	Brief Description
Housing Accelerator Fund	Creation of a Housing Accelerator Fund to implement innovative funding mechanisms that will foster the development of an expanded supply of Permanent Supportive Housing units for people exiting chronic homelessness. The Fund would be jointly administered by MOHS and Department of Housing and Community Development and leverage significant Federal, State, and private sector investments. Funding proposed is projected to help support the development and 3 years of operations and services for an additional 675 units of Permanent Supportive Housing, the estimated number of units needed to meet Permanent Supportive Housing needs among people currently experiencing homelessness in Baltimore.
Homelessness Diversion Program	Establishment of a homelessness diversion program to ensure individuals and families experiencing housing instability do not become homeless and enter the emergency shelter system. Funding proposed is projected to provide diversion-focused financial assistance and services for 600 individuals and for 450 families with children before the end of December 2024.
Rapid Resolution Program	Establishment of a rapid resolution fund to help individuals and families experiencing an episode of homelessness to quickly re-enter stable housing and avoid the increased risks of COVID-19 infection and illness associated with homelessness. Funding proposed would create a fund to provide flexible client assistance to support rapid exits from homelessness for 480 households before the end of December 2024, as well as support training for services providers in rapid resolution practices.
Purchase of Interim Housing / Emergency Housing Facilities for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness	Purchase of hotel properties to create permanent non-congregate interim housing / emergency housing facilities for adult men and women experiencing homelessness in Baltimore City, with the potential for conversion to permanent housing units in the future. Funding proposed is projected to support the acquisition, renovation, and 3 years of operations of 2 sites providing an estimated 275 interim housing / emergency housing beds.
Housing Navigation and Landlord Recruitment Support Program	Strengthen housing navigation services and landlord recruitment efforts to significantly reduce the length of time that individuals and families remain homeless between receiving a housing offer and moving into a suitable permanent housing unit. Funding proposed would support: additional Housing Identification Specialist positions; continued operations of a cloud-based software platform to facilitate housing inspections and create a centralized inventory of available units easily accessible housing service providers and case managers; flexible landlord incentives and risk mitigation funding; and an expanded network of Housing Navigation Specialist positions.
Shelter Demobilization for COVID-19 Non-Congregate Shelter Sites	Support hotel demobilization and rehousing efforts for individuals experiencing homelessness currently residing in hotel shelter decompression sites established to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including short-term rental assistance and case management services. Proposed funding would fill need for an estimated 177 additional Rapid Rehousing Program slots to meet rehousing needs of current clients at hotel shelter sites, by funding additional rental assistance, utility assistance, and move-in costs, and additional shelter-based case management services and rapid rehousing case management services.

CONCLUSION

As noted previously, there is no assurance that these proposals will be awarded funding or at what scale they might be funded. MOHS is committed, however, to continuing to consider and refine the ideas, information, and priorities identified through these community engagement processes and the Core Leadership Team, to guide future funding and resource development strategies and to inform the final Strategic Investment Plan to be developed through this process.

ATTACHMENT

- *Themes and Ideas Emerging from Community Engagement Processes*



ATTACHMENT

Strategic Investment Planning: Preventing and Ending Homelessness within Baltimore's COVID-19 Recovery

Themes and Ideas Emerging from Community Engagement Processes

September 2021

Findings from Interviews with Key Leaders

The consulting team interviewed 16 key leaders within the community, representing City agencies, homelessness services and housing providers, advocates, and people with lived experiences of homelessness. **These interviews identified the following themes and concerns:**

System and Partnership Themes

- Strong positive response to pandemic, including opening of hotels, reductions in sweeps, vaccinations and testing
- Trust, consistency, and transparency challenges
- Role clarity and coordination issues
- Lack of adherence to Housing First
- Quality of programs and services concerns
- Multiple past planning processes have not led to change or progress
- Lack of clarity on roles and scopes of other consultants, technical assistance providers, and initiatives
- Need for authentic partnership with people with lived expertise

Gaps and Needs within System

- Access to affordable units in market
- Need for scale and fidelity across all interventions, including Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Rehousing, and Rental Assistance
- Need to expand focus on diversion and prevention strategies
- Strategies for addressing encampments and unsheltered homelessness
- Rehousing people out of non-congregate shelters/hotels
- Transformation of approach to shelter

Further themes and concerns related to Gaps and Needs within the System include the following:

Access to Affordable Units

- Historic redlining continues to impact housing availability
- Need for both unit creation and unit access strategies
- Some advocates have not supported development strategies or want only mixed-unit approaches to PSH
- Limited capacity to develop and operate PSH, need for stronger services partnerships
- Rapid Rehousing programs not consistently accessing high-quality units
- People with lived experience have not been supportive of RRH models
- Need for expanded landlord cultivation/engagement strategies
- Challenges with inspections and timeframes

Scale and Fidelity of Interventions

- Lack of full embrace of Housing First approaches across all models

- City has provided mixed messages regarding program models and practices
- PSH is not scaled to needs/demand and HABC supported units are not Housing First
- RRH not being implemented in alignment with best practices, creating cliff for people at end of assistance
- City has not advanced lower barrier, housing-focused shelter models
- City and CoC have not embraced and advanced homelessness diversion to scale

Diversion and Prevention

- Interest in moving "upstream" among some stakeholders, but not clear on targeting that would be needed to most impact entries into homelessness
- City's emergency rental assistance program is not viewed as effective at preventing homelessness and significant concerns about end of moratorium will result in huge influx
- Shelter hotline does not provide robust homelessness diversion response
- Need for infusion of diversion approaches within system; currently largely absent other than perhaps for Veterans
- Emergency shelter providers not currently funded to first seek to divert people from needing to enter shelter programs
- Coordinated Access doesn't offer Diversion or Prevention

Unsheltered Homelessness and Encampments

- Increasing visible numbers of people who are unsheltered
- PIT Count data regarding unsheltered homelessness not perceived as accurate
- Community may be defining virtually all visible unsheltered homelessness as "encampments," not clear if there is triaging or prioritizing of encampments
- Perception that there were more purposeful, proactive approaches to addressing encampments than currently being implemented
- Not sure of status of outreach efforts within pandemic
- Concern about potential return to criminalization when CDC guidance expires at end of pandemic

Rehousing from Non-Congregate Shelters

- Broad support for ensuring that people currently staying in hotels are rehoused from those settings
- Establishment of non-congregate shelters within hotels seen as example of what can get accomplished when partners work together and act with urgency – but mixed perceptions of the quality and success of the environments and services being provided
- Perception that planning for the housing needs of people staying in hotels has not been pursued with the same urgency as establishing the hotels
- Unclear City intentions on continued use of hotels as non-congregate shelters or as permanent housing

Transforming Sheltering

- Significant concerns regarding congregate shelters – quality, practices, and outcomes
- Most people prioritize any hotel conversions to be permanent housing rather than non-congregate shelter or interim housing
- Interest in "reimagining" or "transforming" approaches to sheltering people in the community, but no clear vision for what that looks like or how such work should be initiated or implemented
- Unclear what roles City intends to play within any such efforts

Ideas Generated through Listening Sessions

The consulting team implemented Listening Sessions with community partners and stakeholders, and also held dedicated sessions with the Lived Experience Advisory Committee and the Youth Advisory Board. These discussions generated the following ideas and recommendations for investments; surveys are currently being implemented and analyzed to help guide decisions regarding prioritization among these ideas. **(Note: Ideas are not presented in a ranked order, pending analysis of survey responses.)**

Improving Supply and Access to Housing People Can Afford to Exit Homelessness

Without expanded supply and improved access to affordable, quality housing options, the homelessness response system will continue to struggle to assist people to exit homelessness quickly and successfully, at a time when risks of entering homelessness are increasing.

1. Innovative financing models that support expanded pipeline of permanent housing units in development, including acquisition and pre-development financing
2. More intensive, higher-quality services within permanent supportive housing programs to better support people stability and success, could including funding services reserves within projects
3. Develop new model of housing that requires people to provide sweat equity to rehab units in order to receive housing (model after Habitat for Humanity)
4. Create alternate subsidy models with flexible forms of financial assistance, shallow subsidies, and other models aligned with people's needs.
5. Provide bridge funding to cover rent and help households matched through CA to be immediately moved into an apartment while other eligibility process steps are covered and long-term funding is in place.
6. Shared housing models, both to help make housing more affordable for people and to help people sustain connections and sense of community they have with each other.
7. Funding pool to support landlords to upgrade quality of units, meeting Housing Quality Standards, providing safer living environments for people, and mitigate costs that might result from damages to units.
8. Increase funding for rapid rehousing, including RRH programming with longer lengths of assistance, more flexibility in support provided
9. Flexible funding to better support people's deposits and move-in costs, provide furnishings, etc., via existing Flex Fund
10. Move-on strategy to support people to successfully exit PSH programs and create capacity to serve other people who need PSH
11. Expanded, centralized landlord engagement strategies to better identify available units, with resources to incentivize landlords to participate
12. Expand centralized housing navigation resources to better connect people to housing options, assist with process of securing units
13. Funding to secure a pool of pre-inspected units to speed opportunities for people to find and move into housing.
14. Expand Affordable Housing Trust Fund since it is existing process and vehicle for a range of housing uses; include requirement that CoC and MOHS assist in crafting means to ensure homeless households benefit.

15. Provide bridge funding to cover rent and help households matched through CA to be immediately moved into an apartment while other eligibility process steps are covered and long-term funding is in place
16. Training for staff working within permanent housing programs to strengthen quality of services and outcomes
17. Increase pay for staff working within permanent housing programs to attract and retain skilled staff

Reducing Unsheltered Homelessness

Unsheltered homelessness is both a humanitarian crisis and the most visible form of homelessness in the community. Investments will be needed to save lives and to provide tangible evidence of the community's ability to drive progress on homelessness.

1. Restore or expand some basic services, like showers, mobile showers, safe places for people to sit and rest during the day
2. Fund rapid resolution services and bridge housing options for newly unsheltered homeless people
3. Prioritize and fund direct and quick housing placement directly from encampments and unsheltered settings.
4. Expanded outreach workers to ensure full geographic coverage and identify unsheltered people for housing and services.
5. Enhanced outreach teams by adding staff with clinical skills to engage people with behavioral health care challenges and to link them to services.
6. Expanded numbers and roles for peer positions in order to better connect to people and assist them to access services and housing.
7. Alternative transportation options (such as access to Uber or Lyft rides) to ensure people can access services, get to appointments, etc.
8. Provide enhanced training to outreach workers to support their capacity to engage and assist people
9. Provide non-congregate shelter options that are welcoming and low-barrier
10. Provide hotel/motel vouchers or other options for emergency housing as alternative to entering shelter
11. Increase pay for staff working with people who are unsheltered to attract and retain skilled staff

Strengthening Crisis Response and Sheltering Activities and Capacity

The community must address shorter-term needs, such as operations and rehousing activities out of temporary hotels, longer-term sheltering capacity and quality needs, and the implementation of diversion activities to reduce demand for shelter and other crisis services.

1. Enhanced case management and other services at hotels and existing shelters and for people who are unsheltered
2. Expand availability of Housing Navigators to provide housing navigation from assessment through housing placement (all populations)

3. Expand shelter / interim housing options for all populations, including adults, families with children, transition age youth, and unaccompanied minor youth.
4. Convert hotel(s) to non-congregate shelter or create non-congregate shelter options through other strategies
5. Enhance and strengthen programs to provide safe and affirming shelter and services for TLGBQIA+ people experiencing homelessness
6. Create new homelessness diversion program and problem-solving services that can prevent people from experiencing homelessness or support people to quickly exit homelessness
7. “Bridge Housing” as an alternative to being in shelter for newly homeless.
8. Expanded transitional housing for people who need additional time and services to successfully exit homelessness.
9. Increase legal services to help with eviction defense and access to public benefits.
10. Expanded mental health and substance use disorder treatment services and programs
11. Long-term substance use treatment programs (6 months-2 years)
12. Provide medical respite care options for people with significant health care needs but who do not need to be hospitalized
13. Strengthen oversight of services, training and capacity building, development of standards of care and oversight and support to ensure they are achieved, trauma-informed care
14. Expanded prevention services and resources focused on supporting housing stability of people who have exited homelessness
15. Incentivize mainstream systems to partner and collaborate to better serve shared populations.
16. Training for staff at crisis response and shelter / temporary housing programs – trauma informed care, understanding homeless populations, how to participate in system/processes, information about all programs/services and how to help client access these services
17. Create shelter options for unaccompanied minors and expand transition age youth shelter options
18. Ensure all hotel clients are able to access housing and not be discharged to congregate shelters or unsheltered settings
19. Provide hotel/motel vouchers or other options for emergency housing as alternative to entering shelter
20. Increase pay for staff working with in crisis response and shelter / emergency housing programs to attract and retain skilled staff